



ACT ESA OPERATIONAL REVIEW BUSHFIRE SEASON 2019/20

The objective of the Review was to identify key observations, learning opportunities and good practice for ESA in preparation for the 2020/21 bushfire season.



The Review employed an operational analysis (OA) systems approach to reviewing the ACT 2019/20 bushfire season. Operational analysis is concerned with extracting information from a working system that is used to develop projections about the system's future operations.



The Review identified and examined specific Measures of Performance (MOP) for each phase of the 2019/20 bushfire season. Establishing MOPs helped determine progress relative to ESA's mission objectives, and end states; and in shaping relevant recommendations/guidance for improvement.



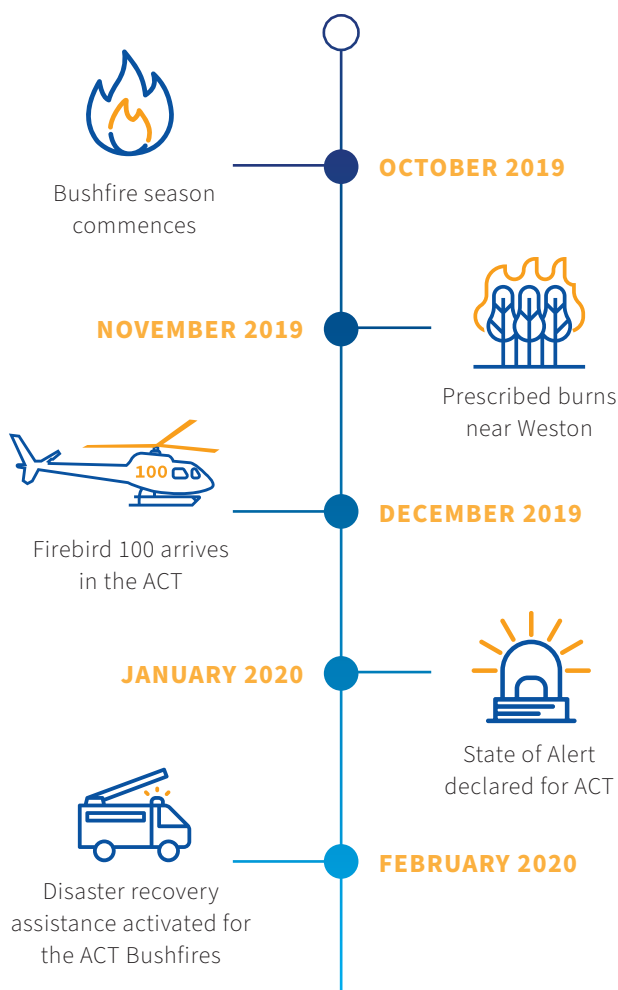
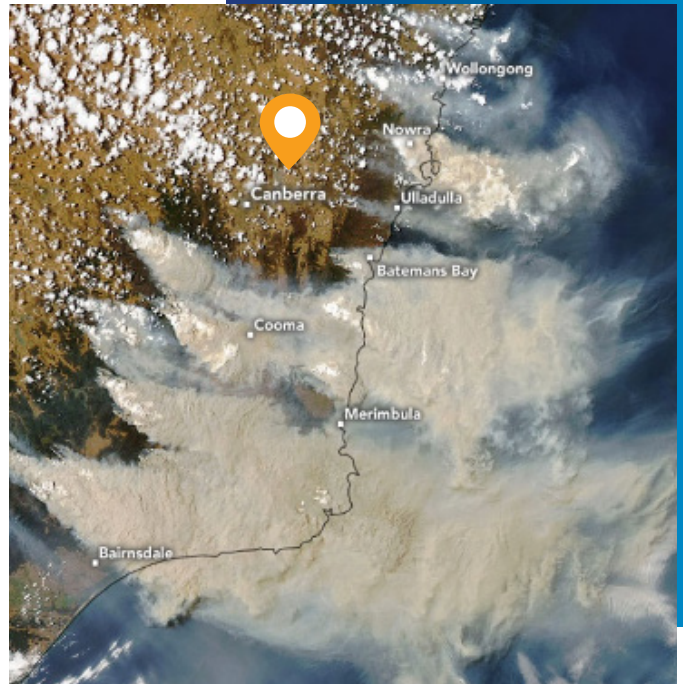
The Review both accommodated and acknowledged the layers of governance and coordination required for emergency management in the ACT, and the various supporting capabilities, systems and processes in play.



ACT BUSHFIRE SEASON 2019/20

The 2019/20 bushfire and storm season produced some of the most unprecedented weather conditions in Australia's history.

Australia was impacted by significant fires with unpredictable and dangerous fire behaviour fueled by hot and dry conditions.



SINCE AUGUST 2019

Unprecedented fire activity impacted the East Coast. ACT firefighters deployed to assist interstate. ACT firefighters and support staff deployed to assist interstate.

2 JAN 2020 STATE OF ALERT ISSUED

To assist community preparedness and organisational response.

DECLARATION OF A STATE OF EMERGENCY

On 31 January given the catastrophic fire conditions and threats to the rural and urban areas of the ACT, a State of Emergency was declared and the ESA Commissioner was appointed as the Emergency Controller.

FROM LATE DEC 2019 TO JAN 2020

Thick smoke impacts ACT from Braidwood & NSW South Coast Bushfires.

BETWEEN 1 OCT 2019 & 4 FEB 2020

ACT declared a record 24 Total Fire Ban days, the ACT on average sees 5–6 per bushfire season.

SEVERE & DAMAGING THUNDERSTORMS

Occurring on: 16 January, 20 January & 10 February.

INSIGHTS

The Operational Review analysed the effectiveness of the ESA's preparation, planning, response and recovery over the 2019/20 bushfire season. This Review reflects the ESA's culture of learning and continuous improvement across all phases of emergency management, encouraging the best use of resources and ensuring the best possible outcome for the protection of the Canberra community.



ACT is well placed to respond to high level demands for bushfire resources, and weather and storm events



Planning framework proved adequate for the management of emergencies and consequences



ESA was able to support other states due to **high levels of preparedness** for the 2019/20 bushfire season



The long term investment in **mitigating fire risk through material responses** and better utilisation of capability contributed to success



Resource sharing between States and access to Commonwealth resources proved essential



ESA successful at conducting operations through the Incident Management Team (IMT)

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RECOMMENDATIONS

The Operational Review identified 31 recommendations categorised under six key themes; Capability, Collective Training, Preparedness, Personnel, Planning, Incident Management. A summary of the recommendations is below. You can view the full list of recommendations on pages 52–53 of the Report.



CAPABILITY

The Strategic Bushfire Capability Framework should be complemented by a strategic approach to preparedness that incorporates IMT planning arrangements and shared resources and assets. ESA's Fairbairn facility should be reviewed to check if 'fit-for-purpose' for concurrent Emergency Coordination Centre and IMT.



COLLECTIVE TRAINING

Whole of government interaction be enhanced through additional briefings and scenario based 'table-top' planning activities. ESA should conduct an annual exercise involving all services to improve all hazards response, interoperability and skills development. ESA should conduct at least annual Level 3 incident exercises testing 'non-standard' scenarios.



PREPAREDNESS

Review RFS hazard reduction task allocations (including Bushfire Operations Plan tasks from ACT Parks and Conservation Service) to ensure adequate opportunities for professional development and skills maintenance.



PERSONNEL

Review fatigue management systems for ESA, and other support arrangements for volunteer staff in the ACT. RFS and SES reputation in ACT community and bushfire experience should be used by ESA as a platform to build further volunteer support.



PLANNING

The ESA should adopt a campaign approach to planning responses to future fire seasons. ESA should review how other services support RFS and further enhance deliberate preparations, planning and training. ESA should develop contingency plans for SES support to fires to cover when additional tasks arise.



INCIDENT MANAGEMENT

ESA review its approach to Level 3 IMT structures and processes (planning, operations, intelligence, logistics) under Australasian Inter-Service Incident Management System for suitability for all-hazards and multi-agency approach, including the development of a more deliberate and coordinated intelligence cycle within IMT planning function under Australasian Inter-Service Incident Management System.

LEARNING LESSONS

The ESA Commissioner is committed to addressing each of the recommendations in the report and has already taken steps to make improvements. Whilst some recommendations can be addressed immediately, others require longer-term planning and consultation with both our workforce and key stakeholders.

ACTIONS, INITIATIVES AND ACTIVITIES ALREADY UNDERWAY INCLUDE:

Capability

- Additional appointments have been made for Senior Directors for both Planning and Preparedness, and Operations and Capability Development to provide assurance to the Commissioner and Chief Officers of the effective and efficient oversight of emergency planning and preparedness activities at an agency wide level.
- Continue to consolidate key relationships with external agencies to ensure future capability development opportunities for personnel.

Collective Training

- Enhancing and increasing expertise in ESA's training capability through the appointment of additional trainers with specialist skills.
- Development of joint exercises to test interoperability across emergency management agencies (including our cross-border partners). Exercises will be designed to 'stress-test' our operational response capability.
- Investment in specialised training for niche skill sets, including fire behaviour analysts and aviation training.

Preparedness

- Mapping of synergies between operational services and identifying opportunities for sharing of resources, knowledge and skills transfer.
- Development of a standardised availability/communications application (CIMARA) for the volunteer workforce that manages the notification and rostering of volunteers, enables the management of resources, and supports the improved wellbeing of the ESA workforce (including fatigue management).

Personnel

- Recruitment for several specialist roles has commenced including Fire Behaviour Analyst, Air Operations personnel and Fire Tower Operators, all of which will aid fatigue management and bolster the existing specialist skills within the Agency.
- Ongoing delivery of 'Continuum of Wellness' framework to ensure a strong and resilient emergency services workforce that remains fit for task.

Planning

- Planning for fire season campaigns that takes an 'all-hazards' approach that recognises and utilises the complementary skills sets of operational services.
- Development of an ESA specific IMT planning cycle for use with Level 2 & 3 incidents.
- Continue to enhance the intelligence gathering and distribution of information within the IMT to inform operational decisions.

Incident Management

- Review of resource management policies and supporting systems to support IMT operations.
- Foster a coordinated and collaborative approach to incident management (through training and exercising), and including a review of the current policy regarding pre-formed IMT and stand-up requirements.

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